



LIVING LIBERATED

**Are we bound forever to vices,
bad habits, addictions, and
other sins that shackle and put
us in bondage?**

**Today we can learn HOW to free
ourselves from that bondage by
the power of Jesus Christ!**

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PRIDE AND HUMILITY

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Many people desire the answer to the questions (1) how do I free myself from lust, addictions, and hang-ups that mess up life and (2) how do I get the power to make the needed changes, or how do I get God's power in my life?

The beginning point is to admit the problem, not just the physical manifestation of the problem, but the root problem. The root problem is "I'm in charge, and I don't need God." That was the problem Adam and Eve had. Paul wrestled with it in Romans 7, and it's our problem.

The key is found in James 4:6. Everything in the rest of the lesson is going to spring from that great text. James said, "God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." That's worth repeating. "God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." The Bible states the key to power in your life is humility and the key barrier to God's power is pride, because a person full of pride cannot see a need to change or to improve. Only when one is full of humility, will he be given the power to change.

The Bible talks about two kinds of pride. There really is a good kind of pride. If you don't believe that, read Galatians 6:4, or 2

Corinthians 7:4. The good kind of pride is synonymous with self-respect, satisfaction for a job well done, and the enjoyment of seeing others succeed. Only two or three times in the Bible do you see pride referred to that way. Ninety-nine percent of the time, you'll find pride referred to in a very negative way, where it's linked with conceit, selfishness, arrogance, or egotism. Somebody said, "Egotism is the only disease that when you've got it, it makes everybody else sick." By looking at a number of famous and important people, one can see how one can easily become a victim.

Remember Muhammad Ali, those of you in my generation or above, and how brash and proud Ali was in his prime? The story is told that Ali was on a plane one time and it was about to take off. The flight attendant came to Ali and said, "Sir, you'll have to buckle your seat belt." Ali in his typical brash, showman-type manner said, "Superman don't need no seat belt." To which the flight attendant responded, "Superman don't need no airplane either." He buckled the belt.

Pride's very easy to see in others, but it's difficult to see in ourselves, but it's there. It's not only the basic human problem, it is your basic problem, and it's my basic problem, too.

Pride that leads to other problems.

1. Pride prevents personal growth.

You think you've got it altogether and don't need to change, grow or improve. You have pride dwelling in your spirit. Somebody said, "When the head starts swelling, the mind stops growing." The one sure way to know that you need this lesson is if you don't think you do.

Solomon said "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Proverbs 26:12) "He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray." (Proverbs 10:17) These two verses together are saying the proud man or woman only goes by self-evaluation. They think they know everything there is to know and there's no sense getting any counsel.

If you've got marriage problems and you won't talk to anybody about it, that's pride. That's all it is, pure and simple. If you've got financial difficulties and you won't seek counsel about that, that's just your pride. If you're failing at your work,

school, or some relationship and you're just trying to cover it up, that's pride. All too often we'd rather look smart than be smart. The way to become smart is by being humble. Pride prevents one from growing.

2. Pride sabotages my relationships.

Pride is the root of all relational conflict and disharmony. When you act out of pride, you tend to be demanding, unsympathetic, even obnoxious and rude.

Have you ever seen a proud person treat a waiter in a fancy restaurant? It's disgusting, they are demanding and never being satisfied.

Pride makes us hold grudges and keep score. It makes us unable to admit we're wrong. "Pride only breeds quarrels." (Proverbs 13:10) I'm going to repeat that. "Pride only breeds quarrels."

The root of virtually every argument or quarrel in a marriage is pride. You don't want to admit that your husband or wife may be partially right. So many family conflicts could be resolved if we could just swallow our pride.

How many times do you think this scenario has been acted out? A young man gets rebellious and lets loose at his dad and the father loses his temper and says, "Get out of the house and don't come back." They are alienated for who knows how long because neither of them can force out these six most difficult words in the English language, "I was wrong. I am sorry." Pride destroys relationships, and pride also produces stress and anxiety.

They drift apart for who knows how long because neither of them can force themselves to utter these four most difficult words in the language: "I made a mistake. I'm sorry."

The focus of a pride-filled person is on self. It's on my status and my image. Politicians now have spin-doctors. They don't care about the truth; they just want the image to be right. Image is everything. But it really reveals an insecurity and a feeling of inferiority.

Have you ever watched on FOX, CNN or another channel one of the worldwide summits, or a UN meeting? You see these tinhorn dictators and the ambassadors from the tiniest countries come marching in with eight rows of braids and 40 medals and these brightly adorned uniforms, but the presidents and the ambassadors of other countries, come in just in a modest dark suit. Why? They don't need to impress anybody. They're secure.

Have you ever seen on FOX, CNN or another channel one of the world summits, or a UN meeting those dictators and ambassadors of the smaller countries parading in uniforms brightly adorned with eight rows of bars and forty medals? While others enter simply in a modest dark suit. Why? They don't need to impress anyone. They are confident.

Tony Campolo, one of my favorite authors, said, "Pride often destroys those that we love the most." The pride of parents can lead to the destruction of children. People who are out to prove they are better than others often use their children to this end. Campolo goes and explains what we already know. "How many parents have pridefully lived through their children's grades, through their children's sports career, through their children's beauty, and all under the guise upon doing it for their betterment. They're wrecking their psyches, while they're inflating their own personal egos." Campolo concludes by saying, "Happiness is often the casualty of pride."

Proverbs 29:25 says it's a dangerous thing to be concerned about what others think of you. Pride causes anxiety and stress because if I'm trying to live one image, but inside I'm something else, I become stressed, discouraged, and disillusioned. By contrast, the very first thing Jesus our Lord said on the Sermon on the Mount was "Happy are the humble."

Happiness through humility

If you're going to break free of the things that shackle you, there's no way you're going to do it until you begin to develop the mindset of humility. This is the real core of the lesson.

1. Recognize your weaknesses honestly.

"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) If you don't admit your weaknesses, if you do not admit your perpetual areas of spiritual failure, neither you nor God will be able to work on them.

I love the story of the teenage boy who said to his sister, "Sis, I'm afraid I'm guilty of the sin of vanity." She looked at him and said, "You, vanity, how?" He said, "Well because every time I walk by the mirror, I catch myself stopping and looking and saying, 'Wow, what a hunk.'" She laughed and said, "No, that's not vanity, that's just ignorance."

Many of you will bow and pray tonight before we go to sleep, and say, "Lord, if I've committed sin today." Stop right there, just stop and think. Leave off the "if," because there's no question about it, you have committed sin today. Take the time to isolate the sin in your life, particularly the perpetual sin, the sin you're trying to stuff in the closet. Maybe it's your adulterous affair, maybe it's your lying tongue, maybe it's the hatred of a parent, maybe it's a broken relationship at work or maybe it's something you're just pretending doesn't exist. Get it out on the table and stretch it out before God. Until you admit your weakness, you'll not know genuine humility.

2. Evaluate your strength realistically.

Pride is based upon a false evaluation of self, but humility is based upon the truth. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Paul said, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment." (Romans 12:3) In other words, be realistic about who you are. Some people think humility is an inferiority complex. Humility isn't saying, "Oh I'm wretched, horrible, worthless or nothing. I'm just an old worm." That's not true. You're not a worm, you're not nothing, you're something. Jesus didn't die for nothing. Every one of us, unique in creation, is made in the image of God. The fact is you have strengths. All of us do. God gave them to us but we're also weak in areas. Humility is being honest about your weaknesses and realistic about your strengths.

I love the story of the little girl who walked in Baskin Robbins. She could barely see up over the counter, and said, "Sir, I want one of those hand-packed pints, no lid, just a spoon." The fellow looked at her and said, "Well little girl, are you sure you can eat all that?"

"Oh, yes sir," she said. "You see I'm much bigger on the inside than I am on the outside."

Pride is pretending you're much bigger on the outside than you are on the inside. "Each man should test his own actions, then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to someone else." (Galatians 6:4) That is one of my life texts. There is also a good kind of pride. Paul said, you enjoy your own abilities, enjoy your own successes, a job well done, but don't compare. There are two reasons not to compare.

- a. You can always find someone who is not doing as good a job as you and you'll be proud.
- b. You can always find someone who is doing a better job than you and you'll get discouraged.

God says, I don't want you being either of those. I made you absolutely unique. You're like the snowflake, no two are the same. God just wants you to be you. If you're not going to be you, who's going to be you? Don't compare with other people - you'll either be proud or discouraged.

Galatians 6:4 is a difficult command to obey, particularly in a culture where everything is built upon competition. Let's just be honest, in America, we only want top dogs. We only want gold medal winners. We only want the salesman of the year.

You watch during the fall when the camera goes down to the sidelines in the football game and they pan that sideline, all the players take that helmet off and turn. What do they say? Their team record may be four and seven, but they'll look at the camera and say, "We're number one, we're number one." How many times have you ever seen a football player turn to the camera and say, "We're number four, we're number four, and we're proud of it."? No! No! Being number one is not what it's all about, never has been God's standard. It's all about admitting your weakness honestly while recognizing and using your strength.

3. Enjoy your successes gratefully.

Paul said "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did not receive it, why do you boast as though you did?" (1 Corinthians 4:7) Do you know what Paul was saying? Everything you and I have has been given to us by God. We say, I've built my business with my own two hands. It was my idea. Great, but where did you get that mind, your health or your hands? They all came from God. Where did you get the DNA that fashioned your chromosomes that made you like you are? You see the fact is, we all do have designer genes, if you'll pardon the pun. But we didn't design them, God did. How many of you chose your parents, where you were to be born or when you were going to be born? Those are all gifts from God, and what you do with them is your gift back to God. Humility then enjoys success in life, but it does so gratefully, knowing the origin of that success. "Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father." (James 1:17) We need to remember that and the lesson of the whale. When the whale gets to the top, and starts to blow off, is when he gets harpooned. One minute you can be a hero, and the next minute you can be a zero. Don't ever forget, there's just 12 inches difference between a halo and a noose. What we need to do is enjoy our successes gratefully.

4. Serve other people unselfishly.

In October 1989, Psychology Today did a great article about depression. It was focusing on the epidemic that major depression is becoming our culture. It particularly focused on the Baby Boom population, people between ages 30 and 45. Do you realize that people who are in the Baby Boom generation are three to ten times more likely to suffer major depression than their grandparents? That seems bizarre to me because our grandparents were the ones who went through the Depression, the ones who had to struggle to raise ten kids from the milk of one cow. I mean, isn't it amazing?

It continued, "It can be traced to the historical and cultural occurrences which have exalted the individual." In other words, the article said, depression is a result of the "Me" generation---me, my image and my goals. It is plain old selfishness and pride. What they found out, is that a person who's all wrapped up in himself makes a pretty small package.

The article also stated "Just as belief in the nation was crumbling, and belief in God was also fading, the sky-rocketing divorce rate was eroding belief in the family. When people no longer believe that their country is so powerful, that the family can be a source of enduring unity and support, or that a relationship with God is important, what else can they turn to for identity, satisfaction, and hope? People then only have one alternative; they turn to themselves and depression results."

In that same magazine, there was another article called, "Beyond Selfishness." Keep in mind this is Psychology Today. It's not trying to promote any particular Christian value. But it said that helping other people overcomes depression. In fact, the article said that when you help others, it actually creates endorphins in your brain. Some of you who are runners and athletes know what endorphins are. It's the hormone chemical that literally gives runners a high. The article stated that when you volunteer to help somebody else, physically you get that same kind of thing. "Volunteering to help makes people feel good physically and emotionally. Like runner's calm, it's good for your health."

What Psychology Today said in 1989 was simply restating what Paul said in Philippians 2, over 2,000 years ago. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should

look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:3) Paul is saying humility isn't thinking poorly of yourself, it's just thinking more about others. The focus is off my needs, my desires, my wants, and the focus is on what other people need. I like to put it this way: humility isn't thinking less of yourself; humility is thinking less about yourself. The model is Jesus.

When all the apostles were in that Upper Room, all too proud to wash each other's feet, Jesus walked in, took a basin and towel, and began washing their feet. Oh, it embarrassed them so much. But proud and insecure people can't serve others, they're too wrapped up in themselves. Each of us needs to lighten up on the introspection, i.e., what about me? Let us just dive in and serve other people.

5. Humble yourself voluntarily.

"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10) I want you to notice that humility is a choice, it's a verb. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to ask God to humble us, it's something we're to choose. We choose to act, speak, and think in a humble way and the promise is, if we humble ourselves, then Christ will lift us up. That's called a paradox. God says the way up is down. The more I humble myself, the more I do admit my weaknesses and recognize my strengths, enjoy my successes in a grateful way, the more I serve others, the more God lifts me up. But the opposite is also true, just as the way up is down, the way down is up.

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18) How many personifications of that proverb have you seen? The moment I start getting filled with pride, the moment I think I've got all the answers, is the moment I begin walking right out to the end of the gangplank. If you're thinking that you don't need God, you will. You will, it's just a matter of time. That's true regardless of whether or not you believe it. It's going to happen. But the longer you wait to see it, the more you'll lose. In a nutshell the worst thing about pride is it cuts off all the wonderful things that God wants to give us. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Amazing Grace

Lesson #1197

Questions:

1. God is
 - Love
 - Righteous (just)
 - Truth
 - Mercy
 - All the above
2. God is the perfect example of being pleased with doing a good job without any egotism or selfcenteredness (pride) in what He has done.
 - True
 - False
3. Egotism, self-centeredness, is the only disease that makes everyone else sick.
 - True
 - False
4. Disharmony and relational conflicts their roots in pride?

- True
- False

5. Pride is destroyed by

- Maturity as one gets older
- Education
- Hard work
- Humility

6. Pride is based upon a valid self-examination.

- True
- False

7. Pride is pretending to be bigger on the outside than you are on the inside.

- True
- False

8. Pride is the opposite of humility

- True
- False

9. One can make a choice to be prideful or humble

- True
- False

Answers to Questions

1. All the Above
2. True 3. True
4. True
5. Humility
6. False
7. True 8. True
9. True